

*Ellenville, NY* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined the United States Department of Health and Human Services Region II Director Jaime Torres and staff from Ellenville Regional Hospital for a conversation on what the federal government is doing to help rural hospitals attract the staff they need to provide adequate health services for area residents. Hinchey highlighted a number of recent pieces of legislation he voted for to help rural hospitals attract qualified nurses and doctors. He also discussed efforts the Ellenville hospital has undertaken to advance recruitment through a new program called HealthMatch, which is being done in conjunction with the Catskill Hudson Area Health Education Center.

"Hospitals in rural settings face a unique set of challenges and there are a number of initiatives I have worked on to help address those challenges," said Hinchey. "One of the problems they face is trouble recruiting an adequate number of qualified nurses and doctors. What I've worked to do is to expand the National Health Service Corporation, which provides scholarships and student loan repayment assistance to help nurses and doctors who agree to serve in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area. It's been a tremendously popular program. We've made some great progress, but today was a good chance to check in and listen about what else is being done and what else can be done to address this situation."

Ellenville Regional Hospital is located in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA); a geographic area, population group, medical facility, or other public facility the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has designated as having an inadequate supply of qualified health care providers.

Hinchey voted to pass the Affordable Care Act, now law, which reauthorizes and expands numerous existing health workforce programs. The law also creates several new workforce programs to increase training experiences in rural areas. Research has found that location and experience during residency training is an important factor in determining future practice.

The health care reform law also expanded a program to provide scholarships and student loan repayments for medical students, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others who agree to a period of service as a primary care provider in full-time clinical practice in a federally designated HPSA.

In addition to discussing federal resources available to Ellenville Regional, Hinchey also listened

to a presentation on HealthMatch, a collaborative new doctor recruitment effort between the hospital and the Catskill Hudson Area Health Education Center. HealthMatch is a health professional recruitment service designed specifically for small and rural communities in New York State. It provides the expertise and real-world experience to effectively match the right primary care providers with communities in need. The collaborative effort helps bring the commitment of health care, business, and civic leaders together in order to provide increased local access to quality healthcare throughout New York State.

In March, Hinchey voted to pass the Affordable Care Act, which is the most significant piece of health care reform legislation since the creation of Medicare in 1965. He was also present for the president's signing of the bill into law at the White House. The measure improves coverage for 415,000 residents in the congressman's district who already have insurance. It provides tax credits to make health care more affordable for another 158,000 families and 15,100 small businesses, and extends coverage to 47,000 uninsured residents. It has already ended insurance denials to children with pre-existing conditions and is helping 10,900 residents with pre-existing conditions find insurance. In addition, 68,000 young adults are now able to obtain coverage through their parents' insurance plans until their 26th birthdays.